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AUTHOR Gelso, Charles J.
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ABSTRACT

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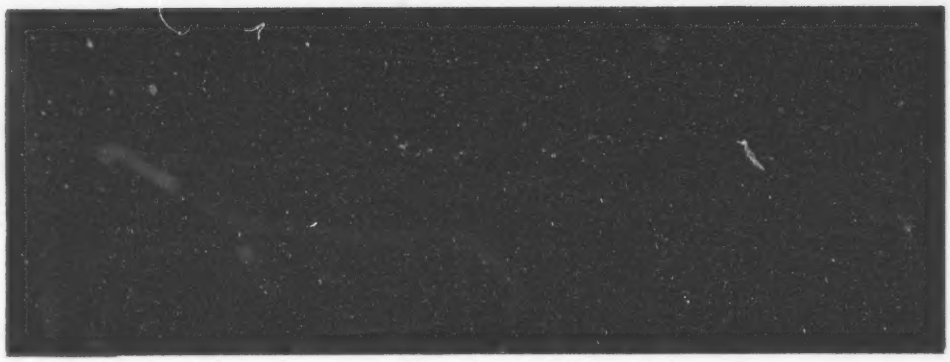

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Abstract

This study examined evaluations of various aspects of research training held by directors of and graduate students in counseling psychology training programs, both APA-approved programs and a sample of non-approved ones. While nearly all respondents felt it desirable to require full courses in both counseling research methodology and content, only about half the respondents indicated that their programs did so. Differences emerged between respondents from approved and non-approved programs, especially between third-year graduate students in these programs, with respect to perceptions of the quality and importance of research training in the programs, estimated productivity of graduates and problems in research training. The data suggested a mild struggle occurring between faculty and students regarding the value of research, and hypotheses were offered about the manner in which students' attitudes toward research change during their graduate education.

SOME DATA ON RESEARCH TRAINING IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

The few studies that have been conducted on the topic reveal that directors of APA-approved training programs in counseling psychology view research training as a major focal point of their programs (Myers, 1964; Schneider & Gelso, 1972). Beyond this point, little knowledge is available about the research training of counseling psychologists. The present study sought to expand on the few earlier ones by examining: (a) course offerings in counseling research--both the methodology and content of counseling research; (b) the perceived quality and importance of research training in counseling psychology graduate programs; (c) the expected research productivity of graduates of counseling programs; (d) perceived problems in the research training of counseling psychologists.

Unlike earlier studies, an effort was made to examine the above topics both from the vantage points of directors of training programs and of students in the programs. In addition, since many if not most counseling psychologists receive their doctorates from training programs that are not APA approved (Myers, 1964; Yamamoto, 1963), the present study sought to assess the aforementioned aspects of research training in both APA approved and non-approved programs.

Method

Three copies of a larger questionnaire pertaining to graduate training in counseling psychology were mailed in March 1973 to the directors of the 19 APA approved counseling psychology programs (Education and Training Board, 1971) and to directors of 25 other established counselor training programs. These were programs that had produced at least five doctorates over a recent five-year period (cf. Krauskopf, Thorenson & McAleer, 1973) and were listed in the American Psychological Association's guide to Graduate Study in Psychology for 1973-74. Thus, these non-approved programs were probably the larger and more psychologically-oriented training programs.

Each director was asked to complete one copy of the questionnaire and to have a third year and a first year student in his program complete the other copies. The initial mailing along with one follow-up letter elicited low response rates, and this must be considered when interpreting the results. Of the 75 (25 programs X 3 respondents each) questionnaires sent to non-approved programs, 29 were completed (44% of the faculty, 36% of the third year students, and 36% of the first year students). Of the 57 (19 programs X 3 respondents each) sent to APA approved programs, 28 were completed (63% of the faculty, 47% of the third year students, and 36% of the first year students).

In assessing course offerings, respondents used the following scale to indicate the current status in their programs of courses in counseling research-methodology and in counseling research-content: (1) required as a full course, (2) required as part of a course, (3) recommended as a full course, (4) recommended as part of a course, (5) available as a full course, (6) available as part of a course, (7) not available in your program. After checking one of these alternatives, in reference to current course offerings, respondents made these ratings in terms of the desirability of the offering in the training of counseling psychologists.

To evaluate the perceived quality and importance of research training for counseling psychologists, respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of (a) the quality of research training in their programs (7 point scale, 1 = mediocre, 4 = good, 7 = excellent), and (b) the importance of research training in their graduate programs (7 point scale, 1 = slightly important, 4 = moderately important, 7 = very important). Respondents were also asked to estimate the percentage of graduate students in their programs who would continue to engage in research following the completion of their dissertation.

Problems in research training were examined by one scaled item and two open-ended items. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which graduate students and faculty were in agreement on the value of research activities for the doctoral level counseling psychologist (7 point scale, 1 = little agreement, 4 = moderate agreement, 7 = strong agreement). They were then asked to specify the major causes of the disagreement, to the extent that it existed. Finally, respondents were asked to note their perceptions of the major problems of their programs in training students to perform quality research both during and following their graduate education.

Results and Discussion

Course Offerings in Counseling Research

A strong majority (82%) of respondents felt it would be desirable to require full courses in both counseling research-methodology and counseling research-content. When these two subject areas were examined separately, it was found that 84% of the respondents felt a required full course in methodology was desirable and 86% viewed a required full course in content as desirable. Most of the few who did not see requiring full courses as desirable would like to see both areas required as parts of courses. No differences existed between respondents from APA-approved vs. non-approved programs or between students and directors with respect to desirability ratings.

In actual practice only about one-half the respondents indicated that their programs required students to take full courses in methodology (51%) and content (47%). Only 53% indicated that a full course was required in either content or methodology. Thus, there appears to be a wide gap between actual and desired research offerings in counseling psychology training programs.

Regarding actual offerings, a curious discrepancy emerged between reports of directors and students from non-approved programs. Ninety-one percent of the faculty versus only 39% of the students ($\chi^2 = 7.40$, $p < .01$) indicated that their program required a full course in counseling research-methodology. This same discrepancy, although to a slightly lesser extent ($\chi^2 = 3.76$, $p < .10$), occurred with respect to research-content. Since nearly all program directors and students were from the same programs, their perceptual differences may reflect a lack of clarity in the non-approved programs with respect to course offerings and requirements in counseling research.

Perceived Quality and Importance of Research Training

In general, respondents judged the quality of research training in their programs to be "good" ($\bar{X}$ = 4.7; 4 = "good" and 7 = "excellent" on the 7 point scale). Also, research training was viewed as an important part of the training programs ($\bar{X}$ = 5.4; 4 = "moderately important" and 7 = "very important" on the 7 point scale).

Table 1 presents ratings of quality and importance of research training as judged by first-year students, third-year students and program directors in the APA-approved and non-approved programs separately. It can be seen that first-year students and program directors from the approved programs do not differ from those in the non-approved programs in ratings of quality and importance, but the third-year students differ widely. Third-year students from approved programs rated both the quality and importance of research training in their programs appreciably higher than did third-year students from non-approved programs.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Regarding differences within the approved and non-approved groups, faculty and students from the non-approved programs differed significantly ($t = 2.41$, $p < .05$) and widely in their judgments of the importance of research training in their programs. These differences are especially pronounced, as evidenced in Table 1, between the program directors ($\bar{X}$ = 6.1) and third-year students ($\bar{X}$ = 4.6).

Among respondents from APA-approved programs, program directors and students were in agreement on quality and importance ratings, but first and third-year students disagreed with the third-year group rating both of these aspects of their research training more favorably ($p < .10$ on both items).

Estimated Productivity of Graduates

Overall, respondents predicted that only 39% of the graduate students in their programs will continue to engage in research following the completion of their dissertations. Krauskopf, Thoreson and McAleer (1973), on the other hand, found that 58% of a large sample of graduates of approved and non-approved programs actually had published research since receiving their doctorates (between three and seven years before the survey). A part of the discrepancy between the estimations in the present study and the actual productivity rate found by Krauskopf et al. may be accounted for by the fact that "many" people with doctorates do publish research based on their dissertations but conduct little if any research after the dissertation is completed. Alternatively, the discrepancy may indicate that counseling students are less research oriented than they were a decade ago, when subjects in the Krauskopf et al. survey were completing their doctorates.

While no differences emerged in predictions of the subgroups within the approved and non-approved programs, respondents from approved programs estimated that a greater percentage of graduates would do research after the

dissertation than did respondents from non-approved programs ($\bar{X}$'s = 45% vs. 32%; $t = 2.51$, $p < .05$). These differences were especially large among the third year students in the approved as compared to non-approved programs ($\bar{X}$'s = 51% vs. 25%; $t = 3.21$, $p < .01$).

Problems in Research Training

Respondents were asked to rate the "degree of agreement between faculty and students regarding the value of research training for the doctoral level counseling psychologist". Responses to this item indicate that there is only slightly more than "moderate" agreement between faculty and students ($\bar{X} = 4.5$; 4 = "moderate agreement" and 7 = strong agreement on the 7 point scale). Notably, no respondent indicated that their was "strong agreement" and only 23% checked 5 on the 7 point scale. Conversely, only 18% checked 1 (little agreement), 2 or 3 on the scale. No differences occurred in this rating among subgroups within the approved and non-approved programs or between respondents in approved and non-approved programs.

The above data appear to indicate that a kind of low-level conflict exists between faculty and students regarding the value of research activities. What are the major causes of the disagreement? When respondents were asked this question, results emerged that are presented on Table 2. Here responses were categorized by the author under the five "factors" listed in the left-hand column and defined beneath the body of Table 2. The factor which clearly emerged as the major cause of disagreement was labeled a student factor. Subsumed under this heading were responses indicating that students were more service-oriented than faculty (the faculty tended to espouse the scientist practitioner model) and that students saw research as relatively uninteresting or irrelevant to the conduct of counseling, etc. This position was stated clearly and strongly by one program director as follows: "Strong professional emphasis in this city deeply affects students. They see psychotherapy as the way to get to heaven, and time spent learning to do research is time not spent learning clinical skills. The faculty has less faith in psychotherapy as a professional raison d'etre, and believes that inquiry to evaluate and improve practice is more important (Yin and Yang)."

Finally, in attempting to ascertain problems in research training, respondents were asked what they saw as the major problem(s) of their program in training students to perform quality research both during and following their graduate education. Responses to this item were categorized in Table 3 under several headings or factors which are defined beneath the Table. The overall pattern is much less clear-cut than for the previous item. Overall, 30% of the responses focus on the faculty factor (faculty gives lip service to research but doesn't engage in it, faculty does not involve students in their research), 21% focused on the instructional factor (statistics course irrelevant, too many hurdles, research courses not interesting), and only 16% focused on the student factor.

Regarding the faculty factor, there was a significant ($\chi^2 = 4.30$, $p < .05$) differences between the frequency with which respondents from approved versus non-approved programs made responses which were grouped under this factor (40% vs. 16% for respondents from non-approved vs. approved programs respectively). Finally, third-year students from approved programs, as compared to

those from non-approved programs, more often gave responses subsumed under the instructional factor (seven out of the 10 responses vs. one out of the thirteen responses by third-year students from approved vs. non-approved programs, respectively, gave such responses; $\chi^2 = 9.66$, $p < .01$).

Conclusions

While the low return rate in this study precludes firm conclusions, some tentative inferences about research training in counseling psychology seem appropriate. For one, when examining research training, it is important to differentiate between APA-approved and non-approved programs. This is so despite the fact that the non-approved programs we selected to study were probably the larger, more-psychologically-oriented and research-oriented ones. Second, in both types of programs students enter being, as expected, primarily service oriented and this orientation tends to be a source of mild conflict between faculty and students, since the faculty generally is more research oriented.

What inferences might the data suggest about changes in students' research attitudes during graduate school? Again, the inferences below are offered in a spirit of tentativeness, especially since our data are of a cross-sectional nature (i.e., first and third year students were sampled). In both types of programs students during their first year possess fairly positive attitudes toward the quality of research training in their programs and they perceive research training as an important part of the programs. By the third year, however, students from non-approved programs tend to have less favorable opinions of their training. Also, they do not expect very many of their peers (only around one-fourth) to do research after graduate school. This pattern in non-approved programs may be partly connected to students' and faculty's view that the faculty itself tends to be non-research oriented (although lip service frequently is given to research).

In the APA-approved programs, students change so that by their third year they have quite positive evaluations of the quality of training and the importance of research in their programs. They expect more of their peers (about one-half) to do research after the doctorate, although they are still primarily service oriented. These changes may be tied to the fact, as several third year students noted, that faculty members themselves are involved in research. On the other hand, what the students come to view as the major impediment to their involvement in research was here labeled an "instructional" factor, i.e., nature of statistics and research courses, too many hurdles, not enough emphasis on applied research.

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Table 1

Ratings by Students and Program Directors of Quality and Importance of Research Training

Item and Rater	APA-Approved Programs X	APA-Approved Programs SD	Non-Approved Programs X	Non-Approved Programs SD	t	p
Quality of Research Training						
First-year students	4.1	2.0	4.4	1.1	.38	NS
Third-year students	5.4	.7	3.7	1.5	3.04	.01
Program directors	5.2	1.3	4.7	1.7	.81	NS
Students & Directors	5.0	1.4	4.3	1.5	1.79	.10
Importance of Research Training						
First-year students	4.7	1.7	5.1	1.6	.48	NS
Third-year students	5.8	.8	4.6	1.3	2.31	.05
Program directors	5.8	1.3	6.1	1.2	.57	NS
Students & Directors	5.5	1.4	5.3	1.5	.54	NS

n's: For respondents from approved programs, first-year students = 7, third-year students = 9, faculty = 12; for respondents from non-approved programs, first-year students = 9, third-year students = 9, faculty = 11.

Table 2

Causes of Disagreement Between Faculty and Students Regarding the Value of Research Activities for the Doctoral Level Counseling Psychologist

	Approved Programs		Non-Approved Programs		Both Types	
Factor	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Student	10	45	19	58	29	53
Faculty	3	14	4	12	7	13
Instruction	3	14	3	9	6	11
Epistemology	4	18	2	6	6	11
No Systematic Disagreement	2	9	2	6	4	7
Miscellaneous	0	0	3	9	3	5

Notes: Student Factor includes students being more service-oriented than faculty (reasons focused on intrinsic interest and irrelevance of research for solving human problems, for counseling, etc.); Faculty Factor includes faculty "talking" but not doing research, poor modeling, etc.; Instruction Factor focuses on weaknesses of teaching (statistics, research design) and emphases on hurdles rather than research questions; Epistemology Factor includes faculty-student disagreement on what constitutes appropriate research content (students more oriented toward practical, applied research).

Table 3

Major Problem(s) in Training Students to Perform Quality Research Both During and Following Their Graduate Education

	Approved Programs		Non-Approved Programs		Both Types	
Factor	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Student	5	17	7	16	12	17
Faculty	5	17	17	40	22	30
Instruction	9	30	6	14	15	21
Time	2	7	7	16	9	12
Facilities	1	3	4	9	5	7
Later Opportunities	2	7	0	0	2	3
No Problem	4	13	0	0	4	5
Miscellaneous	2	7	2	5	4	5

Notes: Student Factor includes students' predominantly service orientation, poor research background; Faculty Factor includes faculty not doing research themselves and/or not involving students in their research; Instructional Factor includes poor instruction in statistics courses and research courses, research training not focused enough on applied research, over emphasis on quantity, focus by faculty on hurdles rather than studying phenomena of interest; poor research training in internship; Time Factor includes problem of competing time demands; Facilities Factor includes problems getting subjects for research, insufficient staff. Later Opportunities reflects current problems in obtaining academic appointments following the doctorate.